

Use of coercive persuasion(“brainwashing”, “mind control”)in psychiatry from an ethical point of view

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Soren_Ventegodt/publication/313477365_Principles_of_holistic_psychiatry_A_textbook_on_evidence-based_holistic_medicine_for_mental_disorders/links/589c1cbc458515e5f454a38b/Principles-of-holistic-psychiatry-A-textbook-on-evidence-based-holistic-medicine-for-mental-disorders.pdf

One of the major reasons for many patients to shift from biomedical to holistic medicine is traumatic experiences of violence and coercion in psychiatry. The patients often complain that they feel the physicians used more force than necessary. Especially they felt that their psychiatrist tried to persuade them to take drugs they did not believe would help them. They also felt that the psychiatric theories were imposed on them, to examine if the complains were in any way substantiated we made an analysis of coercive persuasion in psychiatry, based on the literature. We did not have to read much to conclude that coercion is actually every day practice in psychiatry. The question is if the use of force is necessary or if the Hippocratic principle of *Primum non nocere* is violated. Coercive persuasion, 50 years ago called —brainwashing||, —mind control|| and —thoughtreform|| has recently been recommended by some psychiatrists as an efficient psychiatric tool, which is often not felt as coercion by the patients. The intensive use of antipsychotic drugs, which in Cochrane meta analyses has been shown to reduce hallucinatory behavior without improving the patient's mental state significantly, seems to facilitate coercive persuasion; it reduces patient resistance and autonomy by sedating him or her into a passive, cooperative, weak, and obedient state. Lifton found eight criteria or themes for coercive persuasion and when we compare these to modern biomedical psychiatry we find astonishing similarities. The patients must accept the —sacred psychiatric science||, an imposed —categorical|| psychiatric diagnosis as a personal fault, and must obey and comply with the —treatment||: taking the prescribed, often sedative drugs, staying in hospital until behavior is normalized. Biomedical psychiatry has long been criticized for reducing its patients to —zombies|| or robots, and about 2% of patients commit suicide or attempt to do so shortly after the initiation of psychiatric treatment. It is alarming that both the process and the outcome of biomedical, psychiatric treatment share unmistakable similarities with brainwashing. In conclusion, coercive persuasion that harm patient integrity and autonomy, decreases the feeling of meaning of life, sense of coherence, and quality of life, can explain the pattern of damage.